

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (TODMAN, TERENCE A), SHUM, PGOV, PINT, UY
SUBJ: TODMAN CONVERSATION WITH CIVILIAN BACKERS OF
THE GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY. AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOU, ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN MET WITH FIVE CIVILIAN BACKERS OF THE CURRENT REGIME. THESE INDIVIDUALS DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT AND LAMENTED THE STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN URUGUAY AND THE U.S. THEY BRUSHED ASIDE ACCUSATIONS OF VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PUT MOST OF THE BLAME FOR THE CURRENT SITUATION ON THE CHAOTIC CONDITIONS PRECEDING THE ADVENT OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN MET WITH FIVE CIVILIANS, CHOSEN BY THE GOU, FOR ABOUT 45 MINUTES ON AUGUST 18 AT THE RESIDENCE. THE INTERVIEW WAS OBVIOUSLY ARRANGED BY THE GOU TO COUNTER THAT REQUESTED BY OPPOSITION POLITICIANS. THE FIVE-MEMBER GROUP INCLUDED DR.

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NICOLAS STORACE, PRESIDENT OF THE ELECTORAL COURT, AND DR. FEDERICO GARCIA CAPURRO, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO UNESCO. THE LATTER ASSUMED THE DOMINANT VOICE IN THE GROUP, BUT THE OTHERS SEEMED TO AGREE WITH THE POSITIONS HE TOOK.

3. GARCIA CAPURRO SAID THAT THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN URUGUAY AND THE U.S. ARE NOT ONLY BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS, BUT BE-

TWEEN THE PEOPLE. HE SAID THAT URUGUAYANS ARE DISMAYED BY THE PRESENT ATTITUDE OF THE U.S. AND ADDED THAT URUGUAY HAD HAD TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS IN THE PAST TO COMBAT SUBVERSION AND WANTED "OUR BIG BROTHER" TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS THAT URUGUAY HAD GONE THROUGH.

4. CONTINUING ON THE SAME THEME, DR. STORACE NOTED THAT WHEN HE WAS MINISTER OF INTERIOR IN 1966, HE WAS A GOOD FRIEND OF THE THEN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR HOYT, AND HE WAS SURE THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HAD INFORMED THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE FLOURISHING SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATIONS. GARCIA CAPURRO BROKE IN TO SAY THAT WHEN URUGUAY ASKS FOR ARMS OR ECONOMIC AID, IT IS ONLY TO FIGHT SUBVERSION.

5. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN NOTED THAT THE U.S. UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEMS URUGUAY FACES WITH RESPECT TO TERRORISM AND THAT WE SUPPORT NECESSARY ACTIONS AGAINST THOSE FORCES WHICH ATTEMPT TO DESTROY A SOCIETY. NEVERTHELESS, WE EXPECT THAT THIS ACTIVITY WILL BE CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE LAW. WE UNDERSTAND, HE SAID, THAT IN SOME CASES IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE THERE CAN BE PERSONS OR SMALL GROUPS WHO ACT AGAINST VIOLENCE WITH EQUAL VIOLENCE. WHAT WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, ARE GOVERNMENTS WHICH ACCEPT AS POLICY VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, SUCH AS TORTURE, DISAPPEARANCES, ETC.

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6. GARCIA CAPURRO MADE THE POINT THAT IT IS NECESSARY NOT ONLY TO CRITICIZE THE EXCESSES OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT ALSO TO CRITICIZE THE SUBVERSIVES, AND THAT THE CRITICISM SO FAR HAS BEEN DIRECTED SOLELY AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. IN URUGUAY, HE SAID, THERE ARE NEITHER GOVERNMENT LEADERS NOR MILITARY LEADERS WHO SANCTION EXCESSES. HE SAID THAT WHEN HE WAS MINISTER OF DEFENSE IN 1971, HE PERSONALLY HAD HAD 40 OR 50 OFFICERS DISCIPLINED FOR SUCH EXCESSES.

7. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION BY RICHARD FEINBERG, GARCIA CAPURRO SAID THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEED TO RETURN TO A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE ARMED FORCES, HE SAID, BELIEVE THAT THEY MUST REPIDLY TAKE MEASURES TO DO SO. HE MENTIONED THE REINSTITUTION OF HABEAS CORPUS AS ONE POSSIBILITY, AND SAID THAT THE REFORM OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS ALSO IMPORTANT. GARCIA CAPURRO ALSO NOTED THAT THERE ARE NOT SO MANY PERSONS DETAINED AS IS SOMETIMES STATED. HE SAID THAT THERE ARE POSSIBLY 2,000, AND STORACE SAID THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN AS MANY AS 3,000 AT ONE TIME, BUT 1400 OF THESE HAD BEEN SET FREE.

8. CLEARED BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN.
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Message Attributes

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